

chusetts and several Western states are trying to follow New York City's example. The work of the bureau of personal service has been called an experiment. Politically there is truth in the characterization. As a piece of governmental machinery, a method of achieving a definite result, the system is a demonstrated success. If the result is not desired the system should not be adopted.¹

AKRON'S TWO WAYS OF DRAFTING A CHARTER

BY GEORGE P. ATWATER, D.D.²
Akron, Ohio

I AM very glad to give you my impressions of the charter commission of the City of Akron. You will realize that the charter is not yet completed and that I cannot, therefore, comment upon results. Having served upon the previous charter commission I find that the contrast between the *work* of the two commissions is worthy of notice.

The first commission of 1913 began its work by a consideration of the types of charter. Almost from the beginning proposals were offered which involved a vote. The members were, therefore, put on record as for or against certain definite proposals which in the nature of the case were tentative and partial. The newspapers immediately jumped to conclusions with reference to the opinions or convictions of the members and we had had but a few sessions before the members were all tabulated and a forecast made of the type of charter that would ultimately be drawn. This was most deplorable, as many of the members thought that the duty of the commission was to study and grow in knowledge concerning the question of city government. I feel confident that many of them would have changed their earlier opinions if they had not been held to the line so rigorously by public advertisement. As a result, the fight against the charter began before it was completed.

The present commission began in a totally different fashion. Inasmuch as many cities will from time to time have charter commissions I think that our method would possibly be of value not only as it proved itself out in this instance, but it seems appealing in the first instance to those who have the duty of drawing up a charter. I have heard that other cities had great difficulty in making a start.

A SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

The principle of our method was this: Before determining upon a general type of charter we made a study of all three types, which were

¹ Since the above was written the board of estimate and apportionment has discontinued the essential practice of requiring reports on the need for filling vacant positions.
G. L. T.

² Rector of the Church of Our Saviour, Akron, Ohio.

presented by committees appointed by the chair and whose duty it was to gather the information and to present the arguments for and against each type, but without making any recommendations. Then committees were appointed which included the entire membership of the commission to study the various phases of city government and especially to study Akron. These committees made written reports. In this way the entire commission became a school in both theoretical city government and in practical government with reference to our own city. No votes were taken and no member became committed to any type of government or feature of government which he presented. The discussions which followed any presentation brought out opinions and information, but inasmuch as it was not necessary to influence a ballot there was no keen advocacy of any principle; only an intelligent presentation of it.

When it was thought advisable to secure a notion as to the prevailing opinion in the commission upon some clear cut issue, such as whether members in a council should be determined by elections by wards or at large, the commission went into session as a committee of the whole and the members wrote their opinion upon a slip of paper without signature. These opinions were gathered and read by the secretary. In this way the general opinion of the commission as formulated up to that time was made known. This made progress toward our ultimate goal easier as it did not leave the commission in the dark as to the prevailing opinion. At the same time it did not commit any single member as a strict ballot would, to retain this opinion to the end, but permitted him without embarrassment to be influenced by further information and to change his mind. One of the most interesting features of the method in this respect was the fact that representatives of labor who were present and came committed to present representation on a council by wards, went away after a discussion convinced that representation at large was the most satisfactory method for electing a council.

After this long study the commission as a committee of the whole received and discussed a plan proposed by one of the members. The plan might properly be called the council manager plan. It proposed the election of a mayor and a council of from seven to eleven members, all elected at large, who should hire, appoint and employ an administrator or manager who in turn should appoint the heads of all the various departments. This is as far as we have reached, but we are rapidly approaching a conclusion. I believe that this general form will ultimately receive the votes of at least thirteen and perhaps fourteen out of the fifteen members.

CITY GOVERNMENT'S TWO PHASES

I believe that our commission has been influenced by certain ideas which were presented early in its sessions to this effect: City government has two phases; one which deals with the proper administration of its business

affairs, and one which acknowledges direct responsibility for the welfare and happiness of the people of the community. In the past there has been enormous emphasis made upon the business side of city government. It has been called a strictly business affair best administered by a man of business. It was clearly brought out that city government differs from business in this respect: that a business must produce as well as sell its products; that its income and production are dependent upon many conditions which might influence the country at large; upon the state of demand; upon the conditions of labor; that business is in competition with other business of similar nature and that therefore it must exercise every possible economy, every efficiency of management, in order to be successful. A business man of high calibre entering upon the administration of the affairs of a city would find his problem quite simple. He would have a fixed income produced for him by taxation and not secured by the uncertain fortunes of selling a product. Again he would have no competition. These considerations modify the usual business methods to such an extent that many a man unequal to the task of conducting all the departments of a great modern business would be quite equal to the careful, wise and efficient management of city business. But in addition to that, the city is a great community of living persons.

City government heretofore has been so greatly concerned with protecting the material interests of the city that it has been almost forgotten that its chief responsibility lies in protecting the human interests of the city. A policeman has been considered an agency for the protection of property against humans rather than the protection of humans against the evils which grow up in a large community. We are getting a broader outlook, and a city administration should have as its first consideration the health, welfare, the uplift, and the happiness of its citizens. Consequently provisions should be made in a city government for these primary interests, and the secondary interests of a purely business administration might be properly left to one competent to undertake it. These considerations should influence every charter commission and the department of public safety, the department of public health, and the department of social service should be given the greatest support and the widest possible scope for action. While in no way condoning extravagance in the business administration, it is the far lesser evil that a few thousand dollars should be unwisely spent than that the lives of a few citizens should be jeopardized by improper inspection of sanitation, housing conditions or garbage disposal.³

³ The Akron commission has been unusually careful and conscientious in the prosecution of its work, and has established a number of interesting precedents and methods of procedure, of which the one described by Dr. Atwater is perhaps the most important. See also Mr. Baker's article, entitled "The Organization of a Municipal Health Department," Vol. vii, p. 281.